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When Virtue is in fashion the seeds of it will be disclosed in every heart.

"Mar. Belisarius"

The World affords an amusing spectacle in the ever varying state of what are called the Fashions. Dress and manners seem to be peculiarly under their dominion; though if extended farther we shall find them reigning in every heart, moulding & directing in a degree every sentiment, and every feeling. The effect of Fashion in regulating the costume is truly whimsical; changing into every variety of shape, colour, and substance

with such rapidity, that the careful Persons who are in the habit of wearing their apparel a little longer than the usual time, may be often in and out of the mode in a short period. The minor changes proceed, till they gradually produce a radical alteration; so that, excepting the style of dress peculiar to the different sexes, there are few varieties which they have not undergone. The mind is of a character so flexible, that it accommodates itself at once to the little alterations which are daily taking place; and

so powerful is habit that it will generally make us satisfied with whatever events may happen in our career through life; it brings the proud man down to the level of misfortune. it makes deformity appear as beauty. it gives to vice the semblance of virtue, and adds some agreeable quality to every thing substantial or ideal, that we are in the practice of constantly seeing or reflecting upon. It is thus with dress; it pleases when habituated to us, and novelty comes in with Fashion

to make new modes agreeable.- The good old habits of our ancestors are uncouth in our eyes, and rather subjects of our derision than connected with feelings of reverence and respect for their memories.

It is not easy to say who are the leading characters in this important branch of Social Economy. It seems generally to be first displayed on the Person of some dashing Buck, or glittering Belle, from whom it spreads over the fashionable World, then to every other station, till some new folly takes its place, and runs the same weary round.

There is a Fashion too, of manners, equally varying with that of dress, directing

the internal policy of the Drawing room, and all the niceties of etiquette. Like dress, manners vary at every stage of the progress of Society;-at times they are rude and unpolished;-occasionally they are stiff and formal; and sometimes all ease condescension and freedom. One who has been retired for a few years from the World, on returning finds quite a new scene open before him. Another style of appearance, and of action, has been organized, nor can he readily embrace them; to use the vulgar phrase, he is like a fish out of water, and must again return to his proper element, retirement, or become a Practitioner

in the follies of the Day.

The Fashions of Existence & establishment are perhaps included under that of dress & manners. There is no limit to extravagance in these points but the limit of necessity; and profusion being ever the order of the day. Style seems to be the essence of happiness in the fashionable World. To possess what is necessary and convenient, is not enough without this grand accompaniment, the desire of surpassing others is a paramount principle of human nature; it ever exists in some shape, ready to break forth whenever an opportunity is presented. In some rare minds this sentiment is directed to every thing great and noble, in common minds it is

the wish of distinction in whatever is brilliant & showy, ~~worthy~~ attractive to the Vul-gare & fitted for Vulgar admiration - It is a lamentable fact that the latter principle is gaining ground on the former; - its influence has extended to Men who ought to have been above it, and it spreads to that class of Society whom fortune has hitherto kept below it. The effect of this system is to debauch manners, and create artificial distinctions to injure private happiness, often to destroy private peace. Of all the connexions founded on the rules of Civil Society, that of marriage should meet with the most open encouragement, as productive of

happiness to individuals, and as beneficial to Society; yet this prevalence of esprence and dissipation tends to prevent the Union of the two Sexes, & to embitter that Union when formed. Nor are these all: the encouragement offered to the useless trades, a/prendage to luxury, the subserviency of a part of the community to the ideal wants of a few, have the necessary consequence of loosening the Bonds of civil Union, and of introducing a correspondent dissoluteness of manners and of morals.

It would be a research not entirely uninteresting to enquire what particular modes of dress of manners, and of expression have prevailed in different nations at different periods of their History. We shou

find probably in days of republican simplicity, all convenient, plain, and unaffected; during the period of high prerogative, stiff, formal, and precise; and under a relaxation of Government, a corresponding degeneracy in these. A learned Writer has observed that he could form a good idea of the manners & history of a people from a reference to their Statutes; and it might perhaps be averred with equal truth of their History by their Fashions.

It might be expected, that the the mind would wander at large into every variety of speculation, unrestrained by the bounds of custom; but even the mind owns itself influenced by the notions of the world, and seldom arises in its might to hurl

aside the clouds of error, ~~and~~ and to bring down pure light with the force of unbiased reason. With cautious steps, we follow on in the ways of our Fathers, and seldom dare to deviate into truth, until some bright Genius arises, and points out new and glorious discoveries, of which we may have thought in the dreams of a visionary, but which we never hoped to see realized.

There are some too who set the fashions in the moral world, whose sentiments are received by the multitude as Gospel truth; if the tendency of their principles and actions, is to support virtuous and noble qualities, the crowd will imitate at an humble distance. If on the contrary, they set an opposite example, the poison will be received, and the contagion spread at once thro

out the community.

It is difficult to say whether by nature we incline more to good or to evil. Our passions are all on the side of the latter. Acting under their impulses, we are often hurried away without intending evil, until we are plunged deep into vice and error. We are then influenced more by our evil, than our good propensities, and most readily follow that example which acts with our passions. But we love virtue & the practice of virtue even in spite of ourselves. The beauties of nature strike the most indifferent Beholder with pleasure, and the excellencies of moral perfection are agreeable to every soul. Those, who are placed in elevated stations, attract generally the notice of their fellow citizens: it is their conduct which must in a peculiar manner influence that of their admirers, in virtue & in vice, in sensuality & plainness, or in luxury & folly. Their responsibility is great let them look well to it, lest they fail in their duty.

Instances are not wanting in the History of any Nation, of the opposite effects produced by the example of the Great, the Rich, and the Powerful. The declension of Public Morals has been in many instances principally owing to them, and in some cases, their generous contempt of the luxurious distinctions thrown into their hands, has done much towards reviving a generous spirit among the People. The body of the Community are seldom bad at heart; those who direct & influence them are Authors of the mischief. Let these be pure in their morals immaculate in virtue & nothing need be apprehended from the vice the folly or the inclination of the multitude.

W.